J. Banks

On the use of the Muriate of Gold in various diseases

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W. E. H
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About 15 years ago Dr. Christien of Montpelier introduced some preparations of Gold to the notice of the profession as substitutes for the use of mercurial remedies in the different forms of syphilis. Considerable attention was afterwards paid to them both in Europe and this country, especially in New York, where several eminent practitioners recommended them in public practice. But, as deserves to be the case with most other novelties, these articles speedily fell into disepute, although they had been eulogized by some writers as equally efficacious with mercury, at the same time they were said to be free from its most inconvenient effects.

It is difficult to say what was the real cause of this almost total abandonment of so valuable a remedy. Perhaps it may be attributed to the fact that Dr. Christien's pretensions were formally discountenanced by a committee appointed by one of the Parisian Societies for the purpose of investigating them. Som influence may also be

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ascribed to a circumstance which very commonly operates in impairing the credit of remedial agents, — an indiscriminate application of them to cases of various kinds attended with opposite conditions of the general system. But notwithstanding these difficulties Gold has not been suffered to languish in complete obscurity. It has found a champion in Dr. Neil of Paris, who not only defends Dr. Chrestien but accuses his judges of partiality and prejudice. The same recent author has also extended the use of this metal to various other diseases with which syphilis can claim no affinity. In Germany where his work has been translated from the original French, much attention appears to have been paid to its suggestions and our remedy has been praised there for its powers against scrophula, the unpleasant local affections resulting from the abuse of mercury, and some of the most obstinate as well as unmanageable varieties of cutaneous diseases. In this City it

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has been much employed during the last 18 months in similar cases; and from the effects which it has generally produced some respectable practitioners have been inclined to consider it as the efficient ingredient in the celebrated Panacea of of Mr. Swain.

There are three different preparations of this substance which have been thus employed; the first of which is gold in its reguline or metallic state finely devided, the second that of an Oxide, and the third of the Muriate, or triple-muriate as it may be called from the circumstance that an alkaline basis is united to it in combination with with the acids. The last of these has been used in the way of friction over the gums, by which means it is said to have the power of affecting the constitution as powerfully as when internally administered. The first and second preparations have been generally introduced into the stomach either in the form of a bolus or mixture - The

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latter method of administering the remedy in all its forms appears to be attended with the most advantages. both because the digestive organs offer a more immediate admission into the circulation and at the same time that impressions made upon them are more directly and powerfully operative upon the whole sentient system. Provided however the constitution can become fairly affected it is probable that no great importance will be attached to the channel through which the medicine has found admission - Still as a much less quantity will be required to produce any given effect when it is internally exhibited; and as the remedy is one of no inconsiderable value in a pecuniary point of view, the method which I have preferred will be likely to obtain the highest approbation As to the comparative value of each of the three forms individually considered - I can only decide on general principles. All the experimental knowledge which I have of Gold

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as a remedy has been derived from the triple mu-
-riate alone;- nevertheless I cannot avoid forming
an opinion from the analogies which may be
traced between these and the various other me-
-tallic preparations. As the salts of all the other
metals are invariably found to be more active
than either the oxides or the reguline bases of
them- so we may conclude in regard to the pre-
-parations of Gold that the muriate is the most
efficient and therefore the most valuable which
can be adopted.

Although Dr. Chrestien deserves the credit
of having introduced the preparations of Gold
which I have here commented on, it ought not
to be concealed that some of the most ancient
surgeons in England were in the habit of using
compounds into which this metal entered as
as an ingredient. The "Aurum vitæ" as well
as the "Aurum potabile" is spoken of by Sal-
-mon as a remedy of great powers. Still it is

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questionable whether he did not use them as Cabalistic words rather than as explanatory of any virtue which he had observed that Gold particularly possessed. He employed, as most practitioners of his day were accustomed to do, various articles of discrepant natures in combination with each other; and as Chemistry was then but little cultivated he could not have been acquainted with the actions and reactions which must take place among the heterogeneous materials of his alexi-pharmic compounds. Quicksilver. gold. nitric acid, spt of nitre &c were mixed with each other without any regard to the affinities which prevail among them. But I will extract his directions for the manufacture and use of his "Aurum Vitæ" to give some idea of his Knowledge of our remedy; they are as follows.

℞ "Auri purissimi foliati unciam unam, Aqua regis uncias quatuor, misce et in tepido calore arena dissolva. ℞ Argenti vivi purificati.

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uncias octo, spiritus nitri uncias sedecim, mis-
ce et dissolva; has solutiones confunde, et in
retortam distilla ad siccitatem usque, calcinetur
in Crucibulo caly residua, augendo ignem, ut
spiritus corrosivi secessum faciant à calce in
fundo remanente: hanc calcem edulcorato, et cum
alcohol vini figito; sic obtinebis Aurum Vitæ.
Aliter sic: ℞ Auri purissimi unciam unam, argen-
ti vivi purificati uncias octo, misce fiatque a-
malgama hoc pone in Vitro infernali, posito ut
supra apud sectionem undecimam, cum igne primo
leni, post fortiori donec materia in pulverem rubi-
cundissimum, instar Cinnabaris conversa sit;
quod perfacile sit opus, sæpe eximendo, conterendo
et reponendo in Vitro infernali materiam; continu-
ando autem ad opus perfectum digestionem: sic
habebis. Mercurium præcipitatum Aureum vel
solarem!! It is evident from the tenor of these di-
rections that he could have had no precise idea of
the manner in which his royal metal was

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combined with the other ingredients; and of course he must have been ignorant of the influence which it exerted upon the living system. Both the mercury and the fluids, acid and spirituous, were dissipated by the mode of preparation. The distil-lation separated the Aqua Regia, and the Spt Nitri; and the calcination expelled the quick-silver. The only ingredient which remained must, therefore, have been an oxide of Gold - of which circumstance he was certainly not aware.

Indeed the whole preparation was intended for one of those fortuitous jumbles of heterogeneous materials which the physicians of that period were so fond of prescribing, for the purpose of neutralizing and expelling the various morbific causes of their pathologies. The gold was pro-bably added on the same principle that the Alchemists used it, for the purpose of trans-forming and assimilating the other ingredients to its own regal nature. It was, however active

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in the diseases for which it was exhibited, if we can believe the author in question. He says, to translate his words "It operates in an extraordinary manner in dropsy, Jaundice, Gout, Plague Pleurisy, Rheumatism, Scurvey, Leprosy, Elephantiasis & Lues Venerea; it purifies the blood and rectifies the marrow of the bones, and radically drives forth all noxious matters out of the human body. It is a famous medecine and deserves by the greatest right to be called a Panacea: it is a singular remedy in all deplorable diseases arising from the putrefaction of the humours because it expels or drives out all poisonous and vitious humours: it kills worms and heals all venerial ulcers; purges both by vomit and stool and in somewhat too large a dose causes salivation if often repeated. Dose grij to vj or vij. in some vehicle proper to the disease."

From the circumstance that salivation is here mentioned as resulting from the

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the use of this alchemical preparation, it might be suspected that its efficacy was derived from some of the mercury which remained after an imperfect calcination. But the other preparation of gold, with which not the slightest trace of mercury is combined, have been found in the hands of Dr Chrestien and others, to possess the power of affecting the mouth. It is more than probable, therefore that the virtues which Salmon claimed for his "Aurum Vitæ", whether real or imaginary, were derived from the gold that was actually present.

Having made these general observations I proceed next to detail what particular knowledge I have derived from my own observation respecting the use of Gold as a remedy. The order which I shall adopt will be to state 1st the method of preparing the triple muriat. 2d the best mode of exhibiting it to patients, 3d its effects as far as they can be appreciated from external observation, and 4th a succinct history of the

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cases wherein I have seen it employed.

1st Respecting the mode of preparation, I need only state the process by which Mr. Stitt, an excellent apothecary of this City, has fabricated large quantities of it for the use of several practitioners. It is as follows: Dissolve the gold in a mixture of equal parts of nitric and muriatic acid; dilute the solution with distilled water; then add to it as much muriate of soda by weight as there is gold in the solution; evaporate it by a gentle heat until the residuum is perfectly dry; this is to be reduced to a powder while yet warm in a glass mortar, and afterwards preserved for use in a glass vessel well closed. In drying it care must be taken to apply only a moderate degree of heat, if it is too high, the salt is decomposed; if too low some of the acid will remain mixed with it and deteriorate its medicinal operation.

2d. As to the proper method of administering this preparation it is somewhat difficult to form

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a positive opinion. To obviate its escharotic ef-
-fects Dr. Christian was accustomed to combine
it with large quantities of Starch and Charcoal
or with painters lake. But as these were found
to revive the gold by absorbing the acid or Ox
-ygen, it has since been recommended by Du-
-portal to administer it in a solution with
pure distilled water. The last mentioned writ-
-er conceived that every vegetable and animal
substance has the power of reviving gold from
either of its preparations, and he therefore, con-
-demned every other form than the one I have
mentioned. But however correct he may be
in regard to the influence of charcoal and
some other substances, I do not conceive that
there is much reason to fear that any impor-
-tant change can result from the combina-
-tion of either of the vegetable extracts with
the remedy under consideration. At least I
have not found any cause to believe that such

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a circumstance has resulted from the presence of one article in union with which I have usually administered the muriat of gold. The article to which I allude is the extract of Cicuta, or more properly speaking, the Conium Maculatum. Three grains of this substance combined with from 1/8th to 1/4th of a grain of the triple muriate of gold, in the form of a pill, I have generally found to produce as favorable effect as could have been expected from the use of the remedy under the same circumstances. By its narcotic powers the conium allays the irritation which the action of gold is calculated to excite upon the nervous and arterial systems; while at the same time the remediate impression is allowed to extend more generally through the solid parts and to produce much more durable effects. Indeed all the narcotic extracts, but more especially the one under consideration, are found

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to be attended with the same advantages when conjoined with mercury in its operation upon the general system for the relief of chronic diseases But independent of this, there is also another point of view under which the use of cicuta in conjunction with gold may be advocated. It has been satisfactorily proved that this article possesses no inconsiderable power of counteracting morbid conditions of the body when administered by itself. Scrofulous enlargement of the glands and various indo-lent ulcers are occasionally removed by its action upon the system. What is more to the purpose however in regard to this point the experience of able practitioners has proved that the combination of the two remedies in question does actually promote the operation which is necessary for the eradication of constitutional diseases. Corrosive sublimate and cicuta have long been considered as an offi-

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-cinal compound; and the same advantages which have been derived from these may very reasonably be expected from the administration of gold under a similar formula.

There is another mode of administering the muriat of gold that is resorted to in this City. It consists in dissolving the remedy in the compound decoction of sarsaparilla, in the proportion of two to three grains to eight ounces of the latter. A tablespoonful of this is exhibited 3 times daily, so that from 1/8th to 1/4th of a grain of the gold will be consumed in each dose.

As some constitutions cannot bear the influence of cicuta in consequence of the narcotic power which it exercises over them, there can be no doubt of the propriety of occasionally resorting to the sarsaparilla. It affords a very convenient, as well as agreeable vehicle, and there are besides some effects usually resulting from it that would seem to pro-

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-mote the operation of the remedy with which it is combined. It excites a regular and gentle perspiration at the same time that it invigorates the digestive functions, both of which circumstances are allways to be desired whenever medical treatment of any kind is necessary. But it should not be concealed that the muriate of gold, like all other metallic salts, is liable to decomposition while in a state of solution. Indeed there is hardly any other substance, the nitrate of silver not even excepted, that is more easily affected by the influence of the deoxidizing rays of light, than the one under consideration. It is probable also that chemical action between the carbonic principles of the vegetable matter and the oxygen of the preparation will be promoted by the state of solution in which they are suspended. At all events I am confident that the medicine becomes inert or nearly so by long keeping. In two cases in which the

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gold dissolved in a decoction of sarsaparilla was employed a considerable length of time without any perceptible effect, a speedy amendment was produced by resorting to the same dose of the article in combination with the pills of Cicuta

I am disposed, therefore, to conclude that whenever from any circumstance it may be thought best to combine the gold with a vegetable decoction, but very small quantities should be dissolved at a time. Perhaps it would be better to mix the two articles in proper proportions for each dose only, at any one period. By employing them in this way a sufficient length of time could not elapse for either the influence of light, or the mutual affinities between the two substances to effect any important change in the composition of the remedy.

3.dly Concerning the particular action of gold upon the system I must confess that I have

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found it difficult to form an opinion. It produces no immediate effects, as far as such can be recognised by the state of the pulse and the feelings of the patient. It neither acts upon the kidneys nor intestines, so as to produce sudden diuresis or purging. Still after its use is continued a few days it produces an evident impression throughout the ~~whole~~ system. The skin is invigorated over the whole surface, as is manifested by the healthy glow and perspiration which are soon induced. The secretions both natural and irregular are excited; and the process of nutrition is also, in most cases, evidently invigorated. The digestive powers are always increased; and the processes of assimilation would appear to be correspondingly assisted. From a reference to several of the cases which I have described it will be seen that the most emaciated and debilitated patients are speedily supplied with strength and substance by the combined influence of our remedy and a farinaceous diet.

By J. ~~Gen~~. Banks
216 Market Street

From these general effects which appear to be produced by the remedy we can draw some inferences respecting the particular parts towards which its action is directed. The capillary system, in all the various structures into the composition of which it enters, appears to be especially excited. Its functions are not only increased, but they must in all probability be qualified by the operation of gold. The secretions are augmented, and however unnatural they may have been previously to the exhibition of the remedy, they are speedily restored to their healthy appearance. Indolent & morbid ulcerations become converted into granulating surfaces which secrete a copious discharge of natural pus; and cicatrization soon afterwards proceeds so rapidly as to restore the most deficient parts to an entire condition.

From all these circumstances it appears very plain that the action of Gold

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must be chiefly exerted upon the capillary system of vessels, the functions of which it modifies & changes by virtue of its own peculiar impression. Like arsenic & mercury its influence can be explained neither by the supposition of a tonic, nor a stimulating power. Its action is specific in its nature; and it is therefore calculated to subvert specific modes of diseased actions, of whatever nature they may be endued with — whether of the venereal, mercurial — or scrophulous, or of the variously diversified aspects of cutaneous defaadations.

In describing the different forms of the venerial disease, wherein I have seen the muriate of gold successful, it is somewhat difficult to make a proper selection of cases. Cures of the primary symptoms appear to have been so common that it may be considered unnecessary to detail them; and this will be more particu-

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-larly the case when we recollect that constitu-
-tional treatment is not absolutely requisite
for the eradication of either chancres or buboes.
I will content myself, therefore, with observing
in regard to them, that I have repeatedly wit-
-nessed speedy & perfect cures under the use
of the remedy under consideration. In cases
of old chancres & indolent buboes, particularly
I have conceived that gold will always prove
a most valuable medicine. To illustrate this,
I will describe one case in which I was much
interested.

Case 1st. A young man about 17 years old (a
son of Mr. Topham the Constable) had been
afflicted with a chancre for several weeks, which
had created a large induration around its
basis, & had been for some time accompanied
with a bubo of considerable size in his left
groin. He first took the blue pill three times
daily, which salivated him severely without

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being followed by any advantage. The bubo was retarded by fungus, low diet, and rest; but it did not afterwards subside under the use of a large vesicatory. He was then put under the influence of the pills of muriate of gold and cicuta. In 5 days afterwards a manifest improvement had taken place, & in less than a fortnight both the indurated chancre and the tumour in the groin had entirely disappeared. No symptoms of a constitutional affection have yet been manifested. It is now about 9 months since he was under treatment.

In the secondary forms of the venereal disease, both of the first & second order of parts Gold is a still more valuable remedy. It fills up the ulcers of the fauces, removes the discolouration of the skin, and disperses the tumours of the bones & periosteum more rapidly, according to what few observations I have

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had an opportunity of making, than even mercury itself. At least it is calculated to relieve those cases in which the previous exhibition of mercurials have failed of success.

Case 2d. A woman about 25 years old (a Mrs Butler in north 8th street) had large & deep whitish excavations in her tonsils; several discoloured spots upon the skin of her neck & arms; and a prominent firm tumour upon each patella, of about the size of half a pullets egg. She first took the muriate gold with cicuta for a few days with considerable effect. But on changing the formula to a solution with the compound decoction of sarsaparilla the symptoms became stationary. This circumstance I attributed to a decomposition & precipitation of the muriate of Gold from the solution. She was therefore ordered to resume the pills of muriate of gold & cicuta in which the dose of the

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former was increased to 1/4th of a grain in each pill. In about 15 days every symptom disappeared under this treatment, and she has not applied for ~~treatment~~ advice since. She was dismissed from treatment in September last.

Case 3d. Mr. Butler (husband of the last) had large ulcers on both legs of an irritable character with a deeply copper-coloured skin around, & two large nodes - one on the middle of the right tibia & the other on the opposite Ulna. In less than a month he was completely restored to health by the use of the remedy applied as in the above cases.

Case 4th Bruce (a coloured barber) had large excavated ulcers in his tonsils which had not appeared untill nearly 3 years after the use of mercury successfully administered for the venerial disease. In a few days time the cavities were filled up & cicatrization was progressing under the same remedy.

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Case 5th. A gentleman 32 years of age (Mr. Anthony a clerk in the Aurora office) was afflicted with exceedingly painful ulcers in the tonsils, uvula, gums & both sides of the tongue. He could only swallow the blandest fluids, and he articulated with great difficulty & indistinctness. The ulcers appeared to be of a phagedenic kind, although they were generally covered with a white incrustation. They were accompanied with a highly inflamed state of the surrounding mucous membrane, as was evidenced by great pain, redness, & tumefaction. The lower incisors were very loose & discoloured. Indeed they were ~~spontaneously~~ removed by the fingers of the patient himself. Their alveolar processes were deeply exposed, and finally extracted in a necrosed state by a pair of forceps. High febrile irritation, of a well marked hectic character, attended. Great emaciation & prostration of strength had been produced; and

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his spirits were exceedingly depressed. He had been infected with the venereal disease at three several times previously, each of which attacks had been subdued by mercurial remedies. Eighteen months had elapsed after his last infection before the symptoms which I have described, originated. He had taken the blue pill, corrosive sublimate &c. without any advantage; & a whole bottle of Swaims panacea had been consumed to no purpose! Under these circumstances he was put under the use of the nitrate of Gold dissolved in Sarsaparilla decoction, in the proportion of 1/8th of a grain to every ℥j of the latter. Considerable amendment was soon manifested, which progressed regularly for about two weeks. afterwards the case appeared stationary for a few days, when the bowels became very costive & the stomach disordered. An emetic of Ipecacuanha, followed by a dose of Rhubarb

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& Magnesia corrected these circumstances; and the gold was again resorted to in larger doses. The ulcers were again improved, and finally under the use of the same remedy combined with cicuta, they were completely healed, in less than 5 weeks from the commencement of the treatment. His general health & appetite at the same time improved so that he was enabled to return to his occupation sometime before his cure was effected. He discontinued the use of all medicine in Nov. last; since which time he has remained perfectly well.

In Scrofula Gold promises to become ~~the~~ a most invaluable remedy. I have administered it in several obstinate cases, and although it has not always effected a cure, I have not seen a single instance in which it did not afford more or less relief. I should observe, however, that I

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would by no means recommend it to the exclusion of every other remedy. I can easily conceive that some cases may be complicated with too much arterial action, or hepatic & intestinal derangement not to require a preparatory course of treatment. But in ordinary cases the remedy which I recommend may be commenced at once & be depended on as the best correction of that derangement in the general system upon which the local symptoms of scrofula are supposed to depend.

Case 6th. Geo: Noble (a young man 19 years old apprenticed to the button-making business) applied to me with an enormous enlargement of the lymphatic glands of the throat. They formed an immense tumour which extended underneath the jaw, from one mastoid process to the other. Two abscesses had previously ruptured and discharged scrofulous

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matter. His general health appeared to be good, and his appetite was unimpaired. I put him under the use of the gold & Cicuta pills. which rapidly diminished the tumour, until within the course of about 20 days when the several enlarged glands, which were matted together into the common mass, became insulated from each other. They afterwards decreased very slowly, but they have not yet entirely disappeared. I have discontinued the use of the remedy, after employing it about 2 months.

Case 7th. A young lady 20 years of age (Miss M——h) had enlarged scrofulous glands in both sides of her neck, in the left axilla & under the clavicle of the same side. She exhibited all the characteristic signs of a scrofulous temperament, such as thin, clear skin — light blue eyes soft flabby flesh, impaired appetite &c. But the symptoms which

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alarmed her family & induced her to apply for treatment, was the appearance of an induration of considerable size in her left mamma. As this was slow in its progress & gave little or no pain, I supposed this to partake of the same disposition with the scrofulous glands – She was put upon a farinaceous & milk diet, and she began to take the pills of Gold & Cicuta in October last. In three weeks the glands in her throat & axilla had entirely disappeared; and the tumour in her mamma had greatly subsided. The remedy was then discontinued under an idea that it had made a sufficient impression upon the constitution. I saw her a few days ago & there was hardly a vestage of the tumour remaining.

Case 8th. A black servant boy (living with Mr. Waite the Broker) was affected with a large scrofulous abscess in his neck, which

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discharged an offensive matter & shewed no disposition to healthy suppuration or granulation. He took the gold & cicuta about 3 weeks & was perfectly relieved. Indeed the remedy induced a healthy discharge of pus in less than 4 days, which was followed by a rapid growth of granulations.

I might adduce several more cases from the practice of my medical acquaintances; but these must be sufficient to illustrate the position which I have assumed in regard to the use of gold in scrofula. I will conclude with a brief notice of an interesting case of an obstinate cutaneous disease in which the same remedy proved effectual.

Case 9th. Miss B. was covered in January last with large herpetic blotches, of a blood red colour which occasionally desquamated, disappeared, and again returned. Her case was pronounced by Dr. Ball of New York (where she

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was on a visit when the disease first appeared to be a genuine leprosy. She took the gold & sarsaparilla about 4 weeks and was com-
-pletely cured.